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## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release. Distribution unlimited.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE					
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) Technical Report # 1			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION University of Minnesota		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)		7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION Office of Naval Research	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Department of Chem. Eng. & Mat. Sci. 421 Washington Avenue SE Minneapolis, MN 55455			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 800 N. Quincy Street Arlington, VA 22217-5000		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION Office of Naval Research		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)		9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER N00014-88-K-0366	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 800 N. Quincy Street Arlington, VA 22217-5000			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.		PROJECT NO.		TASK NO. 4132029	
WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.					
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) CALCULATION OF NETWORK PARAMETERS OF CROSSLINKED MARKOVIAN POLYMER CHAINS					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) D.R. Miller					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Interim		13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) May 1989	
15. PAGE COUNT					
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION Paper submitted to <u>Macromolekular Chemie</u>					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	Chain copolymerization, crosslinking, network properties.		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)  Linear copolymer chains form in a chain-addition reaction which includes initiation, homopropagation, crosspropagation, and termination by transfer, disproportionation, and combination. Chain growth obeys the Markov property. Multiple types of monomer units are involved; some types have reactive site, others do not. These chains are then crosslinked by a small monomer crosslinker which may be polydispersed. The resulting network consists of soluble, pendant, and elastically effective fractions. Using classical Markov chain analysis techniques, various statistical properties of the polymer chains are computed. The gel point, weight fractions and other network properties can then be computed. The effects of unequal rates of homopropagation and crosspropagation can be observed.					
20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Dr. Joanne Milliken/Dr. Kenneth Wynne			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 202-696-4409		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL ONR

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# CALCULATION OF NETWORK PARAMETERS OF CROSSLINKED MARKOVIAN POLYMER CHAINS

Douglas R. Miller  
Department of Operations Research  
School of Engineering and Applied Science  
The George Washington University  
Washington, DC 20052



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Presented at Networks '88, Freiburg, September 1988

Research supported by the Office of Naval Research  
Contract N00014-88-K-0366

## Introduction

A frequently encountered class of network polymers consists of polymer chains crosslinked via a small monomer crosslinker. It is useful to be able to predict network parameters such as gel point and weight fractions of soluble, pendant and elastically effective material. Probability models can be developed to accomplish this, subject to certain simplifying assumptions.

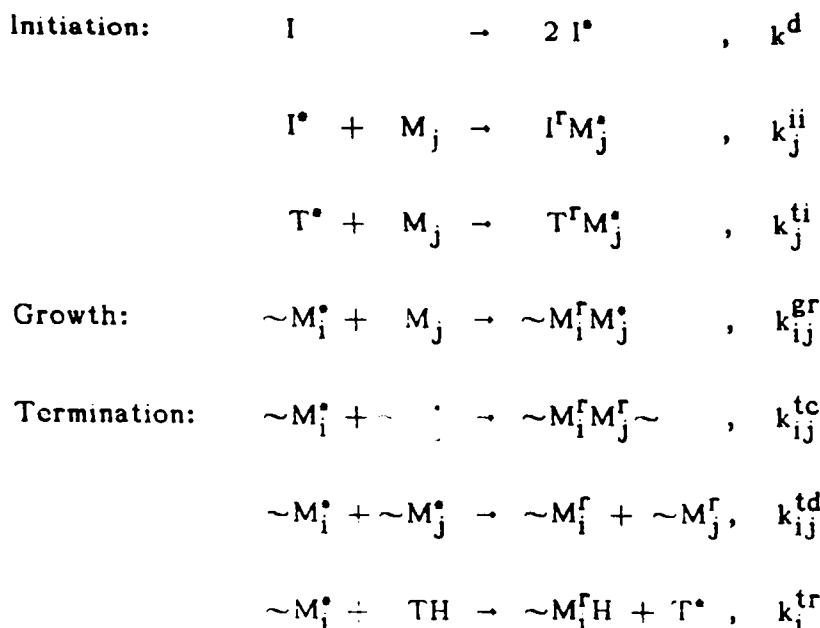
The purpose of this paper is to extend previous probability models of crosslinking systems to include polymer chains with an arbitrary number of different types of monomer repeat units, some with reactive sites and others without. A Markov model of chain growth is assumed. Certain statistical properties of the polymer chains are needed to compute network parameters of the crosslinked system. These properties are computed using the classical theory of finite-state, transient Markov chains; it is not necessary to resort to Monte Carlo techniques to estimate properties of such general chains.

A network model is based on the three simplifying assumptions of Flory [2] and Stockmayer [8]: (i) functional sites have equal reactivity, (ii) functional sites react independently of one another, and (iii) intramolecular reactions do not occur in the finite species. Using statistical properties of the polymer chains and the crosslinking monomer, the network model computes gel point and network parameters such as weight fractions soluble, pendant, and elastically-effective as a function of conversion. This model shows the effect of unequal rates of homopropagation and crosspropagation in the chain-growth reaction on these network parameters.

## A Model of Polymer Chain Growth

Polymer chains are formed from several reactants: initiator,  $I$ ; transfer agent,  $TH$ ; monomers,  $M_k$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, m$ . Chain growth occurs in three stages. During initiation, the initiator  $I$  changes into two activated initiators,  $I^*$ . The activated initiator then reacts with an unreacted monomer,  $M_k$ , resulting in a short chain consisting of a reacted initiator,  $I^*$ , and an activated monomer,  $M_k^*$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, m$ . Chain growth consists of the activated chain-ends reacting with unreacted monomers. Chain termination can occur in three ways. Termination by combination occurs when two chains with activated end-monomers combine to form one completed chain. Termination by disproportionation occurs when two chains

with activated end-monomers terminate but do not combine, resulting in two completed chains. Termination by transfer occurs when a live chain-end reacts with a transfer agent, TH; the hydrogen atom completes the chain and the transfer agent is activated, T\*. The activated transfer agent T\* then initiates a new chain by reacting with an unreacted monomer. This chain growth reaction can be represented as



for  $i, j = 1, 2, \dots, m$ , where the  $k$ 's represent kinetic rates. This, and similar, chain growth reactions are described by Williams [9], Odian [7], Galbraith, et al. [3], and others. A system of kinetic equations based on the above scheme with second order kinetics can be defined and solved (by numerical integration). This yields concentrations (or numbers) of  $I, I^r, T^*, T^r, H, M_k, M_k^*, M_k^r, k=1, 2, \dots, m$ , as a function of time. This system consists of  $3m + 7$  differential equations.

It is assumed that the above system is stiff: the rate at which activated initiator is introduced into the system is much less than the rates of chain growth and termination. This means that the chains initiated during a short time interval (of length  $\Delta t$ ) will see a constant environment while growing; the salient aspects of this environment are the concentrations of  $TH, M_k$  and  $M_k^*, k=1, 2, \dots, m$ . This constant environment and the kinetic growth which depends on just the last unit of a live chain lead to a Markov model of chain composition for the chains initiated

during the interval. Chains from other intervals will also have Markov models, but with different parameters. The totality of chains produced will correspond to a mixture of Markov models. Mixing destroys the Markov property; thus, the solution approach consists of computing the statistical chain parameters needed for network analysis for a succession of short time intervals using the Markov model and parameters for that interval, and then taking the mixture of the chains and parameters. The number of chains initiated by  $I^*$  and  $T^*$  during a short interval of length  $\Delta t$  can be represented by  $\Delta I^r$  and  $\Delta T^r$ , respectively. These values and the current values of  $TH$ ,  $M_k$ , and  $M_k^*$  uniquely determine the polymer chains initiated during the time interval.

#### Instantaneous Markov Model of Chain Composition

Consider the polymer chains initiated in a short time interval, focusing on the portion between initiation and termination. Each position can be filled by different elements. The initiating elements may be  $I$  or  $T$ . Interior elements may be  $M_k$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, m$ . The terminating element may be  $H$ , or phantom elements  $D$ , or  $C_k$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, m$ , where  $D$  represents termination by disproportionation and  $C_k$  represents termination by combination with  $M_k^*$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, m$ . Let  $\underline{X} = (X_0, X_1, X_2, \dots, X_T)$  represent the polymer chain;  $\underline{X}$  is a transient Markov chain with initial distribution  $\pi_0$  and transition probability matrix  $P_r(\cdot, \cdot)$ , where the subscript "r" represents "right", i.e., the chain is envisioned growing to the right. The initial distribution is

$$\pi_0(I) = P(X_0 = I) = \Delta I^r / (\Delta I^r + \Delta T^r)$$

$$\pi_0(T) = P(X_0 = T) = \Delta T^r / (\Delta I^r + \Delta T^r).$$

The transition probabilities  $P_r(u, v) = P(X_{i+1} = v | X_i = u)$  are defined for  $u \in \{M_1, \dots, M_m, I, T\}$  and  $v \in \{M_1, \dots, M_m, H, D, C_1, \dots, C_m\}$ . They are computed from kinetic rates and the instantaneous concentrations of  $TH$ ,  $M_k$ , and  $M_k^*$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, m$ . For example,

$$P_r(I, M_j) = k_j^{II} [M_j]_t / \sum_{j=1}^m k_j^{II} [M_j]_t.$$

This model describes polymer chain structure between initiation and termination.

Now consider the chains which terminate by combination. A chain ending in a phantom state  $C_k$  is actually combined with a chain component ending with  $M_k$ . This component is viewed in the "left" direction, i.e., the structure is seen looking toward the initiator, rather than away from it. The Markov property still holds but the index set for the chain is reversed. Let  $P_\ell(\cdot, \cdot)$  be the transition matrix of the reversed chain, the subscript " $\ell$ " denoting the direction "left," toward the initiating units. The reversed transition probabilities  $P_\ell(u, v)$  are defined for  $u \in (M_1, \dots, M_m, H)$  and  $v \in (M_1, \dots, M_m, I, T)$ .  $P_\ell$  can be computed from  $\pi_0$  and  $P_r$ . Feller [1] and Kemeny and Snell [4] are recommended references for the necessary background on Markov chains.

The initial distribution  $\pi_0$  and the transition matrices  $P_r$  and  $P_\ell$  could be used for Monte Carlo generation of a statistical sample of chains formed during the current short time interval. Note, however, that chains terminating by combination have two initiators and in effect will be counted twice; so the statistical sample must be adjusted accordingly.

#### The Network Model

The chains produced in the above reaction are crosslinked by reacting them with a small monomer crosslinker,  $B_g$ . It is assumed that chain monomer-units  $M_k$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, n_f$ , each have a reactive site, denoted as an A-site. None of the other chain units have reactive sites.

Miller and Macosko [5] present a network model for crosslinking polydispersed chains. Their equation (107) for the gel point is valid for the current system:

$$\alpha_c = [r(E_s F_A - 1)(E_s F_B - 1)]^{-1/2},$$

where  $r$  is the stoichiometric imbalance and  $E_s F_A$  equals the expected functionality of a chain chosen randomly by picking a reactive site. Their analyses is based on the quantities  $P(F_A^{\text{out}})$  and  $P(F_B^{\text{out}})$  which are solutions of the equations:

$$P(F_A^{\text{out}}) = 1 - \alpha + \alpha \sum_{f=0}^{\infty} (P(F_B^{\text{out}}))^f P_s(F_A - 1 = f)$$

$$P(F_B^{\text{out}}) = 1 - r\alpha + r\alpha \sum_{g=0}^{\infty} (P(F_A^{\text{out}}))^g P_s(F_B - 1 = g).$$

These equations are also valid for the current system.

For general chains, additional modelling is required for computation of weight fraction soluble, pendant and elastically-effective. From any repeat unit on a chain, it is important to know the network structure looking "left" and "right" along the chain. Let  $D_\ell$  represent the event of pendant (dangling) material to the left,  $D_r$  pendant to the right, and  $D_b = D_\ell \cap D_r$  pendant in both directions. For a particular repeat unit  $M_i$ , the probabilities of these events are

$$P(D_d|M_i) = \sum_{f=0}^{\infty} (P(F_A^{\text{out}}))^f P(F_x=f|M_i)$$

for  $d = r, \ell, b$ ; where  $F_r, F_\ell, F_b$  are random variables representing the number of functional sites seen when looking "right," "left," and in "both" directions from a repeat unit  $M_i, i=1, 2, \dots, m$ ; and from I, T, and H. For  $i=1, 2, \dots, nf$ , the monomer units have A-sites; thus

$$P(M_i \text{ soluble}) = P(F_A^{\text{out}}) P(D_b|M_i)$$

$$P(M_i \text{ pendant}) = (1 - P(F_A^{\text{out}})) P(D_b|M_i) + P(F_A^{\text{out}})(P(D_r|M_i) + P(D_\ell|M_i) - 2P(D_b|M_i))$$

$$P(M_i \text{ effective}) = 1 - P(M_i \text{ soluble}) - P(M_i \text{ pendant}).$$

For  $i = nf+1, \dots, m$ , the monomer units have no sites; thus

$$P(M_i \text{ soluble}) = P(D_b|M_i)$$

$$P(M_i \text{ pendant}) = P(D_r|M_i) + P(D_\ell|M_i) - 2P(D_b|M_i)$$

$$P(M_i \text{ effective}) = 1 - P(M_i \text{ soluble}) - P(M_i \text{ pendant}).$$

Similar equations hold for I, T, and H. The above equations can be combined to compute overall weight fraction of soluble, pendant, and elastically-effective chain material. Using the above equations and the appropriate theory from [5], network

weight fractions and gel point can be computed, provided the distributions of functionality to the right, left, and both directions from each unit are available.

### Functionality to the Right and Left

Let  $F_\ell$  equal the functionality to the left of a chain unit,  $M_i$ , say. Consider the Markov chain looking left which ignores  $M_k$  without sites ( $k = n_f + 1, \dots, m$ ). Denote the chain by  $\underline{Y} = (Y_0, Y_1, \dots, Y_T)$ ; where  $Y_0$  equals  $M_i$ , the starting point, and  $Y_T$  equals I or T, the terminations looking left. The transition matrix  $P_\ell^f(u, v)$  is defined for  $u \in \{M_1, \dots, M_m, H\}$  and  $v \in \{M_1, \dots, M_{n_f}, I, T\}$ , and can be computed from  $P_\ell$  using the concept of absorption probabilities for Markov chains. The distribution of  $F_\ell$  is related to  $\underline{Y}$ :

$$P(F_\ell = f | M_i) = P(Y_{f+1} = I \text{ or } T | Y_0 = M_i),$$

which can be computed from  $P_\ell^f$ . Denote this conditional distribution as  $\mathcal{L}(F_\ell | M_i)$ , for  $i=1, \dots, m$ ; and also for H.

Now consider functionality to the right,  $F_r$ . This is more complicated because of the possibility of termination by combination. Let  $F_r^O$  equal the functionality on the original chain, and let  $F_r^C$  equal the functionality on the continuation added by termination by combination. Consider the Markov chain  $\underline{Z} = (Z_0, Z_1, \dots, Z_T)$  of monomer units with functional sites to the right until termination; the termination state  $Z_T$  may be H, D, or  $C_k$ ,  $k=1, 2, \dots, m$ . The transition matrix  $P_r^f(u, v)$  is defined for  $u \in \{M_1, \dots, M_m, I, T\}$  and  $v \in \{M_1, \dots, M_{n_f}, H, D, C_1, \dots, C_m\}$  and can be computed from  $P_r$ . The conditional distribution of  $F_r^O$  given the termination state is related to  $\underline{Z}$ :

$$P(F_r^O = f | M_i, C_k) = P(Z_{f+1} = C_k | Z_0 = M_i) / P(C_k | M_i)$$

where

$$P(C_k | M_i) = \sum_{f=0}^{\infty} P(Z_{f+1} = C_k | Z_0 = M_i),$$

which can be computed from  $P_r^f$ . Denote this conditional distribution as  $\mathcal{L}(F_r^O | M_i, C_k)$  for  $i, k=1, 2, \dots, m$ ; and similarly for I and T, initial states.



Suppose the additional functionality to the right results through termination with phantom state  $C_k$ ; this is equivalent to looking left from  $M_k$ , which may or may not contain a functional site itself. So

$$\mathcal{L}(F_r^c|M_i, C_k) = \mathcal{L}(F_r^c|C_k) = \begin{cases} \mathcal{L}(1+F_\ell|M_k) & k=1, \dots, nf \\ \mathcal{L}(F_\ell|M_k) & k=nf+1, \dots, m \end{cases}$$

Combining the functionality of the two parts of the chain to the right gives

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}(F_r|M_i) = & \sum_{k=1}^m \mathcal{L}(F_r^o|M_i, C_k) * \mathcal{L}(F_r^c|C_k) P(C_k|M_i) \\ & + \mathcal{L}(F_r^o|M_i, H) P(H|M_i) + \mathcal{L}(F_r^o|M_i, D) P(D|M_i) \end{aligned}$$

where "\*" represents the convolution of probability distributions.

For chains produced in a short time interval,  $F_r$  and  $F_\ell$  are conditionally independent given the starting segment. Thus the sum in both directions is obtained by convolution:

$$\mathcal{L}(F_b|M_i) = \mathcal{L}(F_\ell|M_i) * \mathcal{L}(F_r|M_i),$$

$i=1, 2, \dots, m.$

### Mixtures of Polymer Chains

The above probability laws for functionalities to the right, to the left and in both directions from chain repeat units are for the chains produced in a short interval of time:  $(t, t+dt)$ . The probability law for the totality of chains is the mixture of the laws for the short intervals. Suppose  $\mathcal{L}_t(F_x|M_i)$  is the law for chains produced in  $(t, t+dt)$  and  $dM_i(t)$  equals the number of  $M_i$  monomers reacted in  $(t, t+dt)$ . Then, if the reaction runs over  $(0, S)$ , the probability laws for functionality are given by

$$\bar{\mathcal{L}}(F_d|M_i) = \int_0^S \mathcal{L}_t(F_d|M_i) dM_i(t) / \int_0^S dM_i(t)$$

for  $d=r, \ell, b$ , and  $i=1, 2, \dots, m$ . Similar equations hold for  $I, H, T$ . These are the distributions needed for computation of weight fractions soluble, pendant, and effective. The distribution of  $F_A - 1$  needed for the gel point is obtained by mixing  $\bar{L}(F_b|M_i)$ ,  $i=1, \dots, nf$ .

### A Computational Example

The following system is a variation of one in [5]. Polymer chains have two types of repeat units: the first has a reactive site, the second does not. Elements have the following masses:  $M_1 = 146$ ;  $M_2 = 142$ ;  $I = 50$ ;  $T = 75$ ;  $H = 1$ . The kinetic rates:  $k^d = .01$ ;  $k_1^u = k_2^u = 2.0$ ;  $k_1^{ti} = k_2^{ti} = 4.0$ ;  $k_1^{tr} = k_2^{tr} = 8.0$ ;  $k_{11}^{tc} = k_{12}^{tc} = k_{21}^{tc} = k_{22}^{tc} = 6.0$ ;  $k_{11}^{td} = k_{12}^{td} = k_{21}^{td} = k_{22}^{td} = 4.0$ ;  $k_{11}^{gr} = k_{12}^{gr} = k_{21}^{gr} = k_{22}^{gr} = 1.0$ . (This system has equal rates of homopropagation and crosspropagation.) Moles of initial reactants:  $I = 1.0$ ;  $TH = 2.0$ ;  $M_1 = 50.0$ ;  $M_2 = 50.0$ . The reaction went for a time duration of 1.50 time units. The solution of the kinetic equations was done in three time intervals, using a simple-minded difference equation approximation with a step size of 0.001 time units. The resulting chains had a number-average number of 7.43 monomer units and a number-average functionality of 3.72.

These polymer chains were then reacted with a small  $B_g$  crosslinker. This monomer was polydispersed, consisting of  $B_2, B_3$ , and  $B_4$  units which had weights 168, 478, and 788, respectively, and mole fractions 0.3, 0.4 and 0.3, respectively. The mass of the reactants: mass of A-chains = 1000.00, mass of B-monomers = 600.00. There was a stoichiometric imbalance:  $r = .862$ . The site-average functionalities are  $E_s(F_A) = 7.43$  and  $E_s(F_B) = 3.20$ , which gives a gel point:  $\alpha_c = 0.286$ . The weight fractions of soluble, pendant, and elastically effective material are shown in Figure 1 by the solid lines and referred to as System I.

In order to investigate the effect of unequal rates of homopropagation and crosspropagation, two additional chains systems were computed. Both systems are identical to the above system except for chain-growth rates. System II has faster homopropagation:  $k_{11}^{gr} = k_{22}^{gr} = 1.9$ ,  $k_{12}^{gr} = k_{21}^{gr} = 0.1$ . System III has faster crosspropagation:  $k_{11}^{gr} = k_{22}^{gr} = 0.1$ ,  $k_{12}^{gr} = k_{21}^{gr} = 1.9$ . Both of these systems yielded chains with identical number average length (7.43) and functionality (3.72) as before. In System II (homopropagation  $\gg$  crosspropagation)  $E_s(F_A) = 10.95$

and  $\alpha_c = 0.230$ , a significant change from before. In System III (homopropagation  $\ll$  crosspropagation)  $E_s(F_A) = 7.00$  and  $\alpha_c = 0.296$ , not much change. The weight fractions for System II are shown in Figure 1. The weight fractions for System III do not differ much from System I (homopropagation = crosspropagation).

### Conclusions

A model based on Markovian chain growth has been developed which shows that Monte Carlo methods are not required for analyzing crosslinked systems of such chains. The model has been programmed in WATFIV and runs quite fast (the examples of the previous section each required 17 seconds to compile and run on an IBM 4381). Preliminary investigations show that unequal rates of homopropagation and crosspropagation can significantly affect network parameters. A detailed description of an extended version of this model and analysis is in preparation [6]. It will include pre-gel molecular parameters, multiple types of unequally reactive sites on chains, additional chain-forming mechanisms, and other topics.

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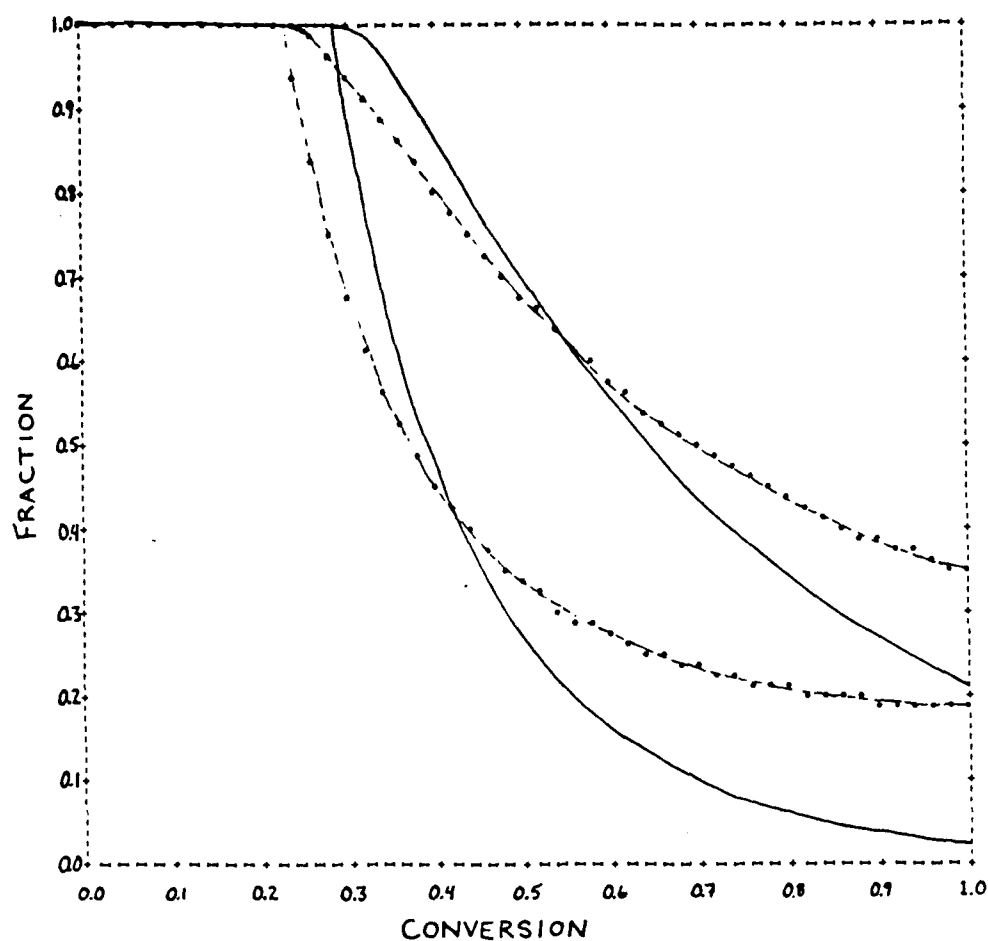


Figure 1. Weight fractions of soluble, pendant, and effective material for two different crosslinking systems as a function of conversion. The solid lines represent System I, an ideal system (equal rates of chain homopropagation and crosspropagation). The dotted lines represent System II, a system with much greater homopropagation rate than crosspropagation rate. The lower curves represent weight fraction soluble. The differences between the two curves represent weight fraction pendant. The differences between the upper axis and the upper curves represent weight fraction of elastically effective material.